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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to consider two criticisms which have been directed at the new admissions policy of the City University of New York. First, it is suggested that this policy has the effect of ending open admissions. If open admissions is defined as the provision of access to the university to all high school graduates in New York City, then the new criteria do maintain open admissions. This contrasts with the earlier eighth grade model which clearly would have ended the program. The second assertion made is that the new criteria create an ethically segregated system within the university. The conclusion on this point is more ambiguous. First, the community colleges have, since the very inception of open admissions, contained a larger proportion of minority students than the senior colleges. If one considers only students not in special programs, the new admissions policy does increase the initial disparity somewhat. On the other hand, if one considers all students including those in SEEK and College Discovery, then it is clear that the new policy does not change the minority group enrollment proportions. The essential conclusion is this: with special program students included, the new model approximates very closely the senior college-community college minority group ratios which existed under the original admissions policy. (Author/AM)

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ALTERNATIVE ADMISSIONS CRITERIA AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK: EFFECTS UPON ETHNIC COMPOSITION

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For some time the University has been considering responses to the devastating fiscal crisis of New York City and State. One aspect of the response has involved the formulation of new admissions criteria. Both within the University and in the community, there has been considerable confusion regarding the nature and consequences of various admissions policies. One major area of confusion concerns effects upon the ethnic composition of the University.

In December, 1975 the Board of Higher Education of City University passed a resolution requiring that students demonstrate at least an eighth-grade reading and mathematics level in order to be admitted to the University. In April, 1976 the Board passed a series of resolutions dealing with the restructuring of the University. One of these resolutions involved a different admissions model which replaced the earlier admissions plan. This new admissions model utilized the college admissions average and percentile rank in the high school graduating class as criteria for admission. Those with college admissions averages of 80 or above or who graduated in the top 35% of their high school class would qualify for senior colleges. Those with college admissions averages between 70 and 79.9, or whose rank in their high school class was between the 36th and 75th percentiles would qualify for community colleges. Those who failed to meet

either senior or community college criteria would be admitted to college transitional programs, where, after a period of time, they could be admitted as regular CUNY students, if sufficient improvement in skills was demonstrated.

This new plan has received a great deal of criticism. It has been stated that, in effect, it ends open admissions. It is also widely believed that the plan tracks minority group students into the community colleges, thereby creating a segregated system in the University. Since the issues and criticism raised are serious, we have conducted a set of analyses which may illuminate these matters.

The method of procedure is as follows: We have used data from a special student file which we have assembled over the last few years. This file contains data on race, the high school record, standardized test scores, as well as many other socio-economic background variables. We consider the effects of the college admissions average-high school rank model upon ethnic composition. For comparison purposes we include a parallel analysis of the earlier eighth-grade reading and numerical competence admissions criterion. For convenience we refer to the former as the

"CAA" model and the latter as simply the "eighth-grade" model. The analyses are conducted for the 1971 freshmen, since this was the last class for which both University-wide test data and CAA data were available.

The ethnic effects of the two admission models are assessed while controlling for a very important factor in the student population: the presence of special program students who are admitted to the University independently of any admission criteria other than the high school diploma or its equivalent. In the senior colleges of the University students are admitted in this way under the SEEK program. In the community colleges the counterpart is called the College Discovery Program. These programs are composed overwhelmingly of low income minority group students (essentially students of Black and Hispanic origins). For the purposes of our analysis, we have assumed that these special programs are composed entirely of minority group students. We think this assumption departs very little from reality.

FINDINGS

We first consider the effects of the new admissions policy for all students admitted through regular admissions procedures; i.e., excluding SEEK and College Discovery Stu-

dents. Second, we shall analyze the effects with these students included.

Analysis With Special Program Students Excluded

Projections for the senior colleges are presented in Table 1. It can be seen that the actual proportion of minority group students in 1971 was about 17%. The new CAA policy, had it been in effect at that time, would have reduced this to 13.4%. We note that the earlier eighth-grade model would have reduced minority group enrollment by a slightly greater proportion.

Parallel data for community colleges are presented in Table 2. It can be seen that the actual minority group proportion of about 30% is reduced slightly (to about 27%) by the CAA admissions model. In contrast the eighth-grade model would have drastically reduced the enrollment of minority students.

In summary, the following points are noteworthy: First under the initial open admissions policy of 1970 minority students were almost twice as likely to enroll in a community college than a senior college (30.3% compared with 16.6%).

Second, this tendency would have been increased slightly under the CAA admissions model. Third, under the earlier eighth-grade model one finds a paradox: The disparity between minority enrollments in senior and community colleges is very small, but this is achieved by eliminating these students entirely from the University. Therefore, while it is true that the new admissions policy does slightly increase the initial disparity in minority group enrollments at senior and community colleges, the model eliminates almost no students from CUNY. We would add that we use the term "eliminate" in referring to those students who would be assigned to remedial transitional programs. In fact these students are admitted to CUNY, albeit in a provisional status.

Analysis With Special Program Students Included

We now consider the ethnic composition of CUNY when all students are included in the projections. Table 3 presents the data for the senior colleges. With SEEK students included, the actual minority enrollment was about 24%. under the new CAA model this proportion remains about the same (24.9%).

As Table 4 shows, with College Discovery students included, the minority enrollment in the community colleges was about 35%.

The new CAA model reduces this proportion slightly (about 31% would have been enrolled).

The essential conclusion is this: With special program students included the CAA model approximates very closely the senior college - community college minority group ratios which existed under the original open admissions policy.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper has been to consider two criticisms which have been directed at the new admissions policy. First, it has been stated that it has the effect of ending open admissions. If open admissions is defined as the provision of access to the University to all high school graduates in New York City, then it is clear that the new CAA criteria do maintain open admissions. This contrasts with the earlier eighth-grade model which clearly would have ended the program.

The second assertion made is that the new criteria create an ethnically segregated system within CUNY. The conclusion on this point is more ambiguous. First, the community colleges have, since the very inception of open admissions, contained a larger proportion of minority students than the

senior colleges. If one considers only students not in special programs, the new admissions policy does slightly increase the initial disparity. On the other hand, if one considers all students, including SEEK and College Discovery, then it is clear that the new policy does not change the minority group enrollment proportions.

While the proportions are not changed for the total student body, the absolute number of all students enrolled in senior colleges has been decreased considerably. This fact must be understood in light of the recent statements by City officials that it is the intention of the City to reduce and ultimately eliminate support for the senior colleges. Given the task that this creates: the need to re-negotiate a funding base for the senior colleges, the decreased enrollments ease somewhat the level of funding required in order to maintain these four year institutions as viable units.

TABLE 1

Ethnic Composition of CUNY First Time Freshmen Under Different Admissions Criteria (1971 Freshmen, Excluding SEEK Students)

	SENIOR COLLEGES		
	WHITE	MINORITY	TOTAL ENROL.
Actual	83.4% (15,148)	16.6% (3006)	18,154
Using Below Eighth-Grade Reading & Math Scores	89.4% (14,118)	10.6% (1682)	15,800
Using CAA and Rank Criteria	86.6% (10,624)	13.4% (1644)	12,268

TABLE 2

Ethnic Composition of CUNY First Time Freshmen Under Different Admissions Criteria (1971 Freshmen, Excluding College Discovery Students)

	COMMUNITY COLLEGES		
	WHITE	MINORITY	TOTAL ENROL.
Actual	69.7% (11,306)	30.3% (4926)	16,232
Using Below Eighth-Grade Reading & Math Scores	86.3% (7665)	13.7% (1217)	8,882
Using CAA and Rank Criteria	73.2% (14,683)	26.8% (5364)	20,047

TABLE 3

Ethnic Composition of CUNY First Time Freshmen Under Different Admissions Criteria (1971 Freshmen Including SEEK Students)

	SENIOR COLLEGES		
	WHITE	MINORITY	TOTAL ENROL.
Actual	75.6% (15,148)	24.4% (4889)	20,037
Using Below Eighth-Grade Reading & Math Scores	79.8% (14,118)	20.2% (3565)	17,683
Using CAA and Rank Criteria	75.1% (10,624)	24.9% (3527)	14,151

TABLE 4

Ethnic Composition of CUNY First Time Freshmen Under Different Admissions Criteria (1971 Freshmen, Including College Discovery Students)

	COMMUNITY COLLEGES		
	WHITE	MINORITY	TOTAL ENROL.
Actual	64.5% (11,306)	35.5% (6223)	17,529
Using Below Eighth-Grade Reading & Math Scores	75.3% (7665)	24.7% (2514)	10,179
Using CAA & Rank Criteria	68.8% (14,683)	31.2% (6661)	21,344